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What's Camp Williams? It Has Long, Interesting History and Many Uses

(Editor's Note: How much do you know about Camp Williams? Probably not much, other than it is a national guard training camp. But it actually is used for many other things and has a long and interesting history. This is the first of two articles on the camp.)

By EDNA LOVERIDGE

LEHI — Most people in Utah have heard of Camp Williams, and most know it's a national guard training camp and have at least a vague idea of where it is.

But few know that it's nearly half a century old, or how it got its name, or anything else of its interesting history or the many uses made of it besides pure military training.

The colorful and historic camp was created by President Woodrow Wilson on April 24, 1914, when he set aside 18,700 acres of land adjacent to the Jordan Narrows and Jordan River for military use. Probably both the regular Army and National Guard used the camp prior to 1917 when the National Guard held a 25-day encampment just before entry into federal service for World War I. At this first recorded encampment, the modern convenience of the time was spring water being piped to the camp area taps and wooden tent floors in the officers tents.

1922 Encampment

The next recorded use of the camp was by the guard in August, 1922, for an encampment.

In 1927 the state purchased one quarter section of land and leased another (which was later purchased) upon which the camp proper now stands. It was in this year the first buildings were erected and a continuing improvement program begun.

Sometime in 1928 Governor George H. Dern named the area "Camp W. G. Williams" in honor of Brig Gen W. G. Williams, the adjutant general of the Utah National Guard, whose efforts

were mainly responsible for securing the site.

During World War II the camp was turned over to the federal government for use as an army training center. The army erected a number of temporary barracks. These units have since been renovated and converted to supply and administrative buildings. The camp was returned to the state in 1947, and has been in continuous use by the national guard and other agencies since.

Primary Purpose

Captain Brent M. Gudmundsen, facilities officer for the camp,

said that "the primary purpose of the camp is to provide a ready camp at which Utah's national guard could be mobilized almost overnight." He indicated that the camp is maintained year-round to provide a training area for the guard, for conferences and also to provide a state training site for the people of Utah.

The camp maintains adequate fire protection facilities, maintenance shops and winter storage for the guard's equipment. Three families also reside on the post. These include the assistant caretaker, a chef, and the supervisor of the hostess house. There are seven two-story barracks and three tent areas which house the officers during field training. The tent areas will be replaced by additional barracks in the near future, however. There are 200 hutments, which are roomy, cement-floored, metal-roofed shelters with roll-up canvas siding which house from eight to 12 en-

listed men each. The camp maintains 21 permanent mess halls, 13 bath-latrines and 26 unit supply buildings, which store the cots and mattresses and provide office space for each guard unit. There are electrical, plumbing and carpenter shops, a post headquarters building, troop headquarters and buildings for other headquarters and classrooms. During field training a post exchange and a barber shop are in operation. The post dispensary-infirmery can accommodate from eight to 12 patients for short periods and is open during field training. An ammunition storage area is to the west of the main camp. An airstrip, which can accommodate light aircraft, is also maintained and open year-round.

Non-denominational religious services are held each Sunday during field training or weekend training sessions. Heretofore, they have been held in the open in the amphitheater. However, this year a post chapel was ready. The amphitheater, the West Bowl, named after Brig. Gen. J. Wallace West, is beautiful and seats approximately 3000 men and provides movies and other entertainment nightly during training. Graduation exercises and other ceremonies are also held in the beautiful outdoor setting. A large parade ground in the center of the camp is planted in grass. There are several baseball diamonds and volleyball and other athletic equipment is available. There is a small golf course, some fishing and limited swimming facilities.

The camp now consists of approximately 21,093 acres, with some other lands adjacent to the reservation available for use when needed, bringing the total

to approximately 34,720 acres. The terrain offers almost every feature desired for military training. The nearness of the Jordan River, Utah Lake and several canals are excellent for amphibious training. The many types of terrain — flat, rolling, mountainous and gullies — are ideal for artillery practice. The waterways provide bridge building practice and the various types of terrain offer good road building training and infantry maneuver practice. There are also excellent bazooka, machine gun and small arms firing ranges, which are utilized to the fullest in the summer, but are also excellent for winter exercises.